

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	CP/28/24

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 27 November 2024

**Report Title:** Highland Local Child Poverty Action Report 2023/24

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - Place

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 places a duty on local authorities and regional health boards in Scotland to produce annual, joint Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs) describing ongoing and planned action to tackle child poverty at local level.

In line with this legislation Highland Council and NHS Highland led the review of 2023/24 activity that was undertaken by the local authority and wider partners to reduce child poverty and, in discussion with partners, identified the actions required in 24/25. The attached report (**Appendix 2**) presents the findings from the review in the following sections:

- Background and context – the picture of child poverty in Highland
- Update on progress made and outcomes achieved in tackling child poverty in 2023/24
- Proposed actions to be taken in 2024/25 in line with the key themes identified within the Highland's Integrated Children's Service Plan

## 2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- **CONSIDER** and **NOTE** the actions carried out in 2023/24 as set out in section two of Appendix 2;
- **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** the actions for delivery in 2024/25, as noted in section three of Appendix 2.

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – the Plan will be delivered within existing partner resources.
- 3.2 **Legal** – Local Authorities and regional Health Boards must produce a Child Poverty Action Report Annually, as set out in the 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act.

3.4 **Risk** – ongoing review of the implementation of the Plan is essential to ensure a continued focus on reducing child poverty. Ongoing monitoring is carried out at the quarterly Poverty Reduction Group and overseen by the Integrated Children’s Services Board.

3.5 **Health and Safety** (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – no implications

3.6 **Gaelic** – no implications

#### 4. **Impacts**

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

#### 4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary**

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on the proposed actions for 2024/25 and the conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are positive impacts identified in relation to equality, socio economic and children’s rights impacts as a result of the Plan. Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3

<b>Impact Assessment Area</b>	<b>Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment</b>
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children and Young People – <i>Positive</i></li><li>• Children affected by disability – <i>Positive</i></li></ul>
Socio-economic	<i>Positive</i>
Human Rights	<i>No impact</i>
Children’s Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive</i>
Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No impact</i>
Climate Change	<i>No impact</i>
Data Rights	<i>Positive / negative / no impact</i>

#### 5. **Background**

5.1 In 2017, the Scottish Government introduced the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act](#). This replaced the previous UK Child Poverty Act 2010 and included duties on both the Scottish Government and local partners to address child poverty. It also introduced targets as a driver for reducing child poverty across Scotland. Child poverty can have negative effects on the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of the children

who experience it. It also has a wider cost for society.<sup>1</sup> By introducing a Child Poverty Act, which sets out clear targets for reducing the number of children living in poverty, progress can be monitored on meeting these targets.

The legislation requires:

- The Scottish Government to produce a Child Poverty Delivery Plan every four years highlighting how it intends to meet the child poverty targets laid out in the Act.
- Local Authorities and Health Boards to jointly prepare annual Local Child Poverty Action Reports which set out a retrospective look on activities that have been undertaken in the Local Authority area during the previous year to reduce child poverty and contribute to the delivery of the national targets and any planned future activities.

## 6. Highland Approach and Our Priorities

6.1 Reducing child poverty is a priority for the Council and its partners. A core priority within the Council’s Programme is:

*Tackle child poverty and promote access to welfare support.*

Reducing poverty is also a core theme within Highland’s Integrated Children’s Service Plan which sits within a context of the Community Planning Partnership and delivering against the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan.

6.2 The priorities for addressing child poverty in Highland are set out the [Integrated Children’s Services Plan](#). The current plan runs from 2023/24 – 2025/26 and this sets out the current priorities. Poverty is a standalone theme but this also crosscuts across the other themes of the plan, including child protection, health and wellbeing, drugs and alcohol and corporate parenting. It also recognises that child poverty cannot be seen in isolation and that poverty is experienced in families.

6.3 A life courses approach has been taken to the Integrated Children’s Services Plan and actions are structured under the following three life course stages:

Theme 1 – Getting Started (Pre-birth – 5 years)
<b>Improvement Priority</b> – We will reduce the financial barriers in order to increase participation, raise aspirations and address the impacts of poverty
Action 1.1 Develop flexible models of childcare in rural areas
Action 1.2 Implement the Whole Family Approach to mitigate the impacts of poverty
Action 1.3 Develop financial inclusion pathways
Theme 2 – Growing Up (Primary Years)
<b>Improvement Priority</b> – Mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis
Action 2.1 Increase the uptake of sanitary products in schools
Action 2.2 Develop system for weekend food support
Action 2.3 Roll out Cost of School Day Toolkit

<sup>1</sup> A 2023 study found that child poverty in the UK was costing over £39 billion a year - <https://cpag.org.uk/news/cost-child-poverty-2023#:~:text=In%202008%2C%20the%20total%20cost,cost%20could%20be%20substantially%20higher>

Theme 3 – Moving On (Secondary and Young Adulthood)
<b>Improvement Priority</b> – We will raise attainment and close the poverty related attainment gap
Action 3.1 Raise awareness of the impact of poverty amongst children and young people
Action 3.2 Roll out the Family First Approach
Action 3.3 Identify way to provide targeted support within universal service

6.4 Whilst these are priorities, it is recognised that work to tackle and mitigate child poverty is embedded within business as usual activity across partnership organisations and the third and community sector.

## 7. 2023/24 – Progress and Actions for 2024/25

7.1 During 2023/24, updates on priorities include:

- **Developing Flexible Models of Childcare in Rural Areas** - Work has progressed on developing new models for childcare or rural areas. Successful funding bid has led to engaging a consultant to work on developing the integrated single care model pathway. Work has also progressed in liaising with Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate to highlight the changes required in order to effectively test alternative care models in rural communities.
- Highland Employability Service worked with Scottish Child-Minding Association (SCMA) to support people in areas of Highland with no or limited provision to become childminders, supporting training and initial set up costs, resulting in 9 new childminders coming on stream.
- **Implement Whole Family Approaches to Mitigate the Impacts of Poverty** - Through the Shared Prosperity fund, the multiply element aims to improve adult functional literacy, with a particular strand on parents. Between 2022-2024, 142 adult numeracy sessions were delivered to 627 participants.
- **Developing Financial Inclusion Pathways** - The Welfare Advice and Health Partnership started July 2023 to support access to money and welfare rights advice in primary care settings, in particular GP practices. There were 29 GP referrals during 2023/24.
- **Targeting Support within Universal Services** - levels 1 and 2 money counts courses continued to run with 101 and 50 participants respectively during 2023/24. The courses are targeted at anyone – in the public or third sector – who is in a position to have a conversation with individuals around money worries. During 2023/24 work began on developing a Money Counts 3 aimed at managers and supervisors to develop understanding of poverty related practice.

7.2 Areas for priority during 2024/25 include:

- **Flexible Models of Childcare** - piloting the single care model in an area of Highland and develop a toolkit of flexible childcare options for rural communities
- **Implement Whole Family Approaches to Mitigating the Impacts of Poverty** - develop and implement a pilot project aimed at progressing unemployed parents in the Wick area into employment, aligned with delivery of childcare solutions
- **Develop Financial Inclusion Pathways** - adapt the financial inclusion pathway for access to emergency formula milk and develop a route to access emergency funds for families in remote and rural areas.

- **Mitigate Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis** - increase product up-take amongst young people and increase the number of schools using the cost of the school day toolkit
- **Raise Awareness of the Impact of Poverty** - Develop and pilot a Money Counts 3 course designed to support teams and services to become more poverty sensitive and Embed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Whole Family Wellbeing Strategic Assessment

Designation: Chief Officer – Housing and Communities

Date: 8 November 2024

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Summary  
Appendix 2 – Child Poverty Action Report 2023/24

## **Integrated Impact Assessment Summary**

An integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on the Highland Child Poverty Action Plan update. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

**Equality, Poverty & Human Rights** - The focus for the plan is reduce poverty and mitigate the effects of poverty for children and young people in Highland. The proposal therefore will have a direct positive impact on the lives of children and young people, particularly our most vulnerable.

**Children's Rights and Wellbeing** - No Children's rights will be negatively affected and the ultimate focus of the plan is on children and young people and improving their lives through reducing poverty. Several actions within the plan focus around education, including cost of the school day and reducing the poverty related attainment gap. This will help to increase children and young people's access to education.

**Island & Mainland Rural Communities** -The plan recognises the additional challenges faced by rural and island communities and has actions within it to mitigate these, for example new models of childcare in NW Sutherland. There are no Data Protection or Climate Change Impacts.